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Report of the Secretary to the Board of Directors of the Illinois State Historical Society.

SPRINGFIELD, ILL., January 30, 1908.

GENTLEMEN—I beg leave to submit to you my report of the work of the society for the year beginning January 24th, 1907, and ending January 30, 1908. The society has from its organization flourished and grown and the report of each year has been that that year has been one of greater prosperity than its immediate predecessor. The year 1907 has been no exception to this rule. The society has grown and prospered in every branch of its numerous activities. It has increased in membership and in influence. It now has 477 members, 18 of which are honorary members, three life members and 34 members who have joined the society in accordance with our agreement with the Illinois State Press Association. I wish to pay a tribute to these press association members. Few of our members are in positions to be more helpful to the society than are these editors of newspapers throughout the State, and they most generously respond to our requests for assistance. We appeal to them for information in regard to matters relating to their respective neighborhoods, they insert notices of our meetings, and do all they can to extend the usefulness of the society. They also send their newspapers to the library and these files will in time, in fact they do now, furnish valuable history of the localities in which they are published.

The society has lost by the hand of death nine of its members. They are: Judge James B. Bradwell, one of our honorary members; Mrs. Eliza Kincaid Wilson, also an honorary member; Judge David McCulloch, one of the founders and a director of the society; Mr. Charles A. Dilg, Hon. L. H. Kerrick, Mr. John B. Orendorff, Dr. A. P. Coulter, Mr. Peyton Roberts and Hon. Wm. Vocke, one of our vice presidents. Suitable notices of these members will appear in the transactions of the society.

I wish again to ask the members of the society to inform the secretary of the deaths of any members of the society. Our membership is now so large and extends over the entire State, and it sometimes happens that deaths occur and that the secretary, not receiving notice of them, is unable to record them.

The president of the society and the secretary attended the meeting of the semi-centennial of the Chicago Historical Society on February 8, 1907. An interesting historical address was delivered by Mr. Franklin H. Head, the president of

the Chicago Historical Society and interesting letters of greeting and congratulation to this pioneer society from many individuals and societies were read. A number of the members of the Illinois State Historical Society are also members of the Chicago Historical Society and we had the pleasure of meeting them on this interesting occasion. The president and secretary of the Illinois State Historical Society also attended the annual meeting of the American Historical Association at Madison, Wisconsin, on December 27th and 28th, 1907. They attended a meeting of the conference of historical societies of which Prof. E. B. Greene was the secretary, and on the same day attended the meeting of the Association of Mississippi Valley Historical Societies.

At this latter meeting the subject of coöperation of historical societies in the collection and publication of historical materials was thoroughly discussed and several plans were suggested for coöperation in the collection of source materials from the originals records in the older states, and foreign countries. The Illinois State Historical Society was represented in this discussion by President Orendorff and Prof. C. W. Alvord. The Illinois State Historical Society is no longer one of the small societies, and there are several societies that are not as old as we are. I want to urge the members of this society to take some of the work of these important matters in hand. Our committees are active, but as I said to you last year there is still room for improvement along this line. I want each member of the society to aid in the collection of local material. If you have a local society in your neighborhood, and I hope you have, collect first for your local society, and if you have no place to store your material urge your county authorities, or your city council to help you to secure such a place. If you have not a local society, send to the State society local imprints, books or sermons and addresses printed in your towns, or collections of letters, that throw light on the earlier history of the State or any part of it. The secretary has since the last annual meeting prepared and placed in the Illinois State building at Jamestown at the Ter-Centennial celebration of the settlement of Jamestown an historical exhibit relating to Illinois and its people, as usual placing stress upon the Lincoln exhibit. The Illinois State commissioners were well satisfied with the exhibit and have written me that there was no state exhibit at the exposition which approached it in interest, and that it was visited by more than ten thousand people during the progress of the exposition. It may not be out of place to speak of the work done by the Fort Massac commission in marking the site of old Fort Massac. The secretary of the Historical Society is also secretary to the Fort Massac commission. Fort Massac park is the property of the State of Illinois and is supported by the State as a free public park. The Illinois Daughters of the American Revolution appropriated one thousand dollars toward a monument to George Rogers Clark and his 154 brave companions in arms who captured Kaskaskia and the northwest for the state of Virginia and so for the United States. The park is situated on a beautiful bluff of the Ohio river on the

outskirts of the city of Metropolis in Massac county, Illinois. It is a beautiful spot, and the monument has been erected and is a most creditable shaft. The dedicatory exercises of the park and monument will occur in the early summer and the commission and the Daughters of the American Revolution are most anxious that the Historical Society take part. I suggest that delegates be sent to the dedication of this truly historic spot, which marks an era in the historical work of the State. Also at Quincy a monument will be erected to the memory and in honor of George Rogers Clark. This monument is erected from an appropriation by the State Legislature of \$5,000. There are many more historic spots, which the State should own and preserve. Fort Gage, Starved Rock, and other sacred and historic spots should receive attention from this society. In this connection I desire to suggest that occasional meetings of the society should be held in the various localities of the State. Would not a summer meeting at Starved Rock in connection with the LaSalle county historical society be pleasurable and profitable? I think that the meeting in the several towns where the Lincoln-Douglas debates occurred will take the place of these local meetings for this year, and while I know that the committee for the celebration of the semi-centennial of the debates will call your attention to these matters, I can not refrain from urging that the society give the local committees the fullest sympathy and assistance. I think that special committees from the society should be appointed for each of these local celebrations. I believe the time is at hand when the society should publish a regular bulletin or some form of serial publication. Through these publications the work of local historical societies could be greatly facilitated. They may be quarterly, or bi-monthly, and they might be bound as a part of the annual transactions. The papers read or collected by the local societies might form a part of these bulletins.

I have often said that the work of the secretary of the society and the librarian of the library go hand in hand and it is hard to separate them in a report. The library has increased largely in the past year. Our genealogical department is especially flourishing and our collection of genealogical works is a surprise to visitors. The chairman of the committee on genealogy will make a report, so it is unnecessary for me to speak of it further, except to urge any members of the society who may have histories or historical sketches, however brief, of their families to donate them to the library. The library purchases general works, but of course it can not buy family histories, as their name is legion. The librarian will welcome information or suggestions along this or other branches of the work of collecting historical material. We are preparing a bibliography of Illinois authors which the library board will publish in due time. We ask for information of Illinoisans who have written books, poems, songs, magazine or newspaper articles, or of books about Illinois people, places or events. The reference work of the library and society is constantly growing and I with my assistant do my best to meet it, and to respond to all in-

quiries and do the reference work which our correspondence requires. We receive dozens of letters each day to answer which requires considerable labor and research. We have no stenographer regularly, but we sometimes employ one for short periods. We now have in the library more than twenty thousand books and pamphlets. The work of cataloguing and classifying them is well kept up and it is of course no light task. Since our last meeting the transactions for the year 1906 have been published. Five thousand copies of this valuable book were issued and the demand for it increases every day. It is a matter of deep regret to me that the earlier numbers of our transactions are entirely out of print. No day passes but we have inquiries from new members and others who wish to make their sets of our publications complete. It will certainly be necessary to take some steps to have them reprinted. Our last year's book is still in the hands of the printers. As the affairs of the State grow, so the demands for State printing grow, and it becomes more difficult to hasten the book, but I think you will be rewarded for your patience by its excellence when it finally reaches your hands. The publication committee deserves the highest commendation, and the fact that its chairman, Prof. E. B. Greene, gives so much of his valuable time to the editorial supervision of our transactions before the manuscript is placed in the hands of the printer should be especially appreciated by the society, as it ensures the value of the book according to modern historical methods.

The library has issued Illinois Historical Collections Vol. 2, of which you have all received copies. This is edited by Prof. C. W. Alvord, whose splendid introduction, which is a history of Illinois as a county of Virginia, is a distinct contribution to State history.

I very much regret that I am obliged to present to you the resignation of Prof. E. E. Sparks as a director of the society, though he will retain his membership and interest in the society for which he has labored so untiringly. He goes to the State college of Pennsylvania, and while we congratulate the Keystone state we are sorry to lose him from Illinois. He leaves us as a valedictory work his splendid volume, a new edition of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, which the library board will shortly publish.

These, I think, are the most important of the numerous labors in our field of State history. I wish to call your attention to the fact that next year, 1909, will be the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. The Governor recommended to the State Legislature the appointment of a commission to arrange for an appropriate celebration of this great historic occasion. The Legislature by joint resolution authorized the Governor to appoint a commission of fifteen citizens of the State to arrange for a celebration in Springfield on February 12, 1909. This will be one of the great dates of the twentieth century. I most earnestly urge that the society take an active part in connection with the commission to be appointed by the Governor, in making this one of the greatest celebrations that has ever been given in this country. We should invite historical societies from all the states, from large cities, from other countries, to send delegates

to Springfield for this great event. It may be that when the subject of the change of date for holding our annual meeting is discussed you may decide that you would like to hold it the time or very near the time of this great international celebration. I would like to suggest that you each try to make a list of the persons of your acquaintance of whom you have any knowledge who actually knew Mr. Lincoln or Mr. Douglas. We would be very glad to have copies of the reminiscences of these persons in the library. I suggest that you get such persons to write, or to dictate their reminiscences, and send copies to the secretary of the society.

The library is now so crowded that a new book becomes a problem. It may be that as the legal department of the State is moving over to the new and beautiful temple of justice, that we may obtain more room and thus relieve the congestion.

Once more let me say that the society is growing, rapidly, vigorously, and wholesomely. Teachers, preachers, lawyers, doctors, merchants, farmers, housewives, Illinoisans from every walk of life are taking an interest in your work and trying to help you along. I will not speak of the local societies for the chairman of the committee for that purpose will tell you far better than I can how hopeful and encouraging is that work.

We are certainly marching on. I congratulate you, but I beg for help to secure original manuscripts, letters, etc. I am very sensitive of our deficiency in this respect. That is our great weakness. We have not what Wisconsin and Iowa have as yet, but we will have at no distant day. Illinois does not long remain behind in any branch of its work.

My I be pardoned if I say a word that may seem too personal.

I wish to say to the society that its thanks are due to my assistant, Miss Georgia L. Osborne. She has worked early and late. She has never been too ill or too tired to work for the interest of the library and the society. She has been, indeed, my faithful and sympathetic right hand. I hope you will pardon me for making this statement a part of the records of the society.

Respectfully,

JESSIE PALMER WEBER,
Secretary Illinois State Historical Society.